

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

MAY SHOW QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear

We are trying to build a biographical record of Cleveland Artists for reference. May we enlist your assistance with the following data?

FULL NAME: FORBES JOHNSTONE WHITESIDE

MEDIA: PAINTING, DRAWING

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:

NOV. 2, 1918 VANCOUVER, B.C.

SILK SCREEN, PHOTOGRAPHY

ART TRAINING - Schools, Scholarships, etc;

MPLS. SCHOOL OF ART, CERTIFICATE IN PAINTING
UNIV. OF MINN. B.A., M.F.A.

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN:

CLEVELAND MAY SHOW

HOWARD WISE GALLERY

CHIARA GALLERIES

E. AT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM

CARACAS MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

AKRON ART MUSEUM

ALLEN ART MUSEUM, OBERLIN

COLLECTIONS WHICH NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

CLEVELAND MUSEUM

MUSEUM OF MOD. ART

ALLEN ART MUSEUM

BLOSSOM CENTER
BALTIMORE MUSEUM

AWARDS:

AWARD PHOTOGRAPHY CLEVELAND MAY SHOW

PRESENT POSITION:

PROFESSOR OF ART, OBERLIN COLLEGE

We would greatly appreciate it if you would inform us of subsequent awards, purchases, exhibitions and scholarships. Thank you for your cooperation.

Patricia Wint

Director of the May Show

FORBES JOHNSTONE WHITESIDE - Biographical data

Born: November 2, 1918, Vancouver, British Columbia

Permanent Address 29 South Prospect, Oberlin, Ohio

Education: B.A. - University of Minnesota 1941 - Art History Major
Graduate - Minneapolis School of Art 1948
M.F.A. - University of Minnesota 1951 - Studio and Art History

Teaching: Minneapolis School of Art
University of Minnesota
Oberlin College, Department of Fine Arts, since 1951, rank of
Associate Professor
Visiting Instructor of Painting - Summer session, Cleveland
Institute 1957

5 years - U.S. Navy, Naval Aviator (Distinguished Flying Cross)
2 years - Professional experience as Architectural Designer for Cleveland
Architectural firm

Travel: Caribbean, Central and South America
Japan
Spain - 1955-56 with short tour of Europe
Mexico - Summer 1958, 5 months 1959

Exhibitions:

oil 1948-51 - exhibited in Twin City Annual shows, and various other
shows in that area
oil 1951 - Purchase Prize, Upper Midwest Artists Exhibition,
Walker Art Center
watercolor - Delta Phi Delta National Convention Exhibition -
Sweepstakes Award and First Prize
oil 1952 - In two-man show, Allen Art Museum, Oberlin
oil 1953 - Exhibited in Nebraska Art Association's Invitational
Show
oil 1954 - Shared 3 Man Show at Akron Art Museum
oil 1955 - Exhibited in Faculty Show, Allen Art Museum, Oberlin
oil 1957 - Purchase Award, Canton Art Inst. 10th Annual Fall Show
oil - Exhibited by invitation, Nebraska Art Association
68th Annual Exhibition
oil - Exhibited 1st Columbia Biennial, Columbia, S. C.
1958 - Appointed candidate in Ford Foundation competition
oils, 1959 - One Man Show, Denison University
water- 1960 - One Man Show, Lafayette Art Assoc. (Purdue University)
colors, 1961 - One Man Show, Mansfield Art Center, Mansfield, Ohio
drawings
oils 1961 - Group of ^{Ten} Eight show, Howard Wise Gallery, Cleveland
drawings
1962 - Cleveland May Show

1966-^{3rd} Traveling Ex. of Work by Artists of U.I.C.

Dear Miss Barnes -

Thought you'd be
interested if you missed.

I'm still waiting for
the fiber optics info
to come in. Hope

we have no more

troubles with the projects

less. . .

My best -

Stan E.



Photos by FORBES WHITESIDE

Silhouetted against a rear projection screen, artists Daniel Hodermarsky (left) and Forbes Whiteside hold a Synchroma disc, a double layer of plastic about the size of a phonograph record. The imagery shown is blown up from a one-inch square area on another disc. Above, Synchroma is projected on a Whiteside painting, giving it new color values and a sense of movement.

Photo by DWIGHT BOYER



Synchroma . . . Light With Your Music

By WILMA SALISBURY

● A NEW ARTISTIC PHENOMENON is gradually permeating Cleveland's cultural consciousness.

The Synchroma, invented by Bedford research engineer Stanley B. Elliott, has opened a new area of creativity to painters, composers and choreographers. It is raising aesthetic issues for critics and posing practical problems for curators and gallery owners. It is attracting the interest of stage designers and architects, expanding the resources of education and challenging the production techniques of related industry.

As the congregation of Synchroma artists, collaborators and appreciators grows and speaks out, the mass media are awakening to the significance of this new art form. References to the Synchroma have appeared in newspapers, magazines and at least one specialized journal.

The thinking man on the street may not know exactly what the Synchroma is. But he has probably heard about it.

In the simplest definition possible, the Synchroma is an electronic instrument which synthesizes sound and light, creating a visual complement to music, speech or other patterned audio signals.

The idea is not new. It has been floating around since the '20s and '30s when color organs and light spectacles were popular in movie theaters.

It was, in fact, the work of Thomas Wilfred, inventor of the Clavilux (1921), which inspired Elliott to begin his Synchroma experiments.

He had seen Wilfred's "Lumia" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A radiant light ballet projected on a large screen, "Lumia" performed silently in varied color, form and motion.

Elliott felt that Wilfred's imagery was too limited. Through his own experience in polymer research, he knew that a fantastic visual display could be produced when certain polymers were exposed to polarizing light.

He also believed that the ephemeral nature of music could be tracked in light and color, and that the synthesizing instrument could be designed so that an unlimited number of skilled visual artists could create imagery for it.

Thus it was that Elliott began to conceive his brainchild.

That was 10 years ago. The scientist's first efforts were naive and primitive. But he continued to refine and develop his initial idea until today his patented Synchroma is probably more sophisticated and versatile than any comparable sound-and-light synthesizing instrument.

Synchroma imagery, as illustrated, is created when polarized light within a small projector passes through slowly rotating plastic discs which enclose light-sensitive design elements.

Audio signals from a radio, phonograph, tape recorder or microphone electronically modulate the polarized light and control the rate of image movement. When the music is loud, the

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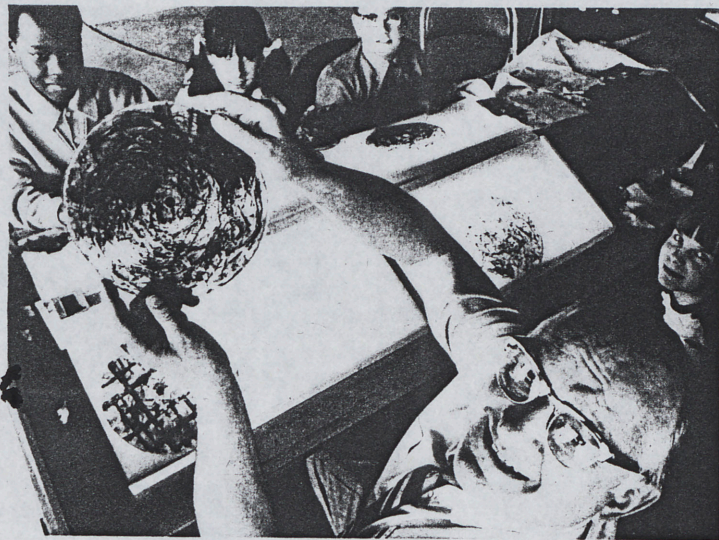


Photo by WILLIAM A. WYNNE

Daniel Hodermarsky of the Supplementary Education Center wants to have fun with Synchroma. So do Augustus Drake, Crystal Horvath, Joseph Dombrosky and (beside him) Kathy Murray. At the right, Forbes Whiteside, associate professor at Oberlin, creates Synchroma discs in immaculate laboratory conditions. A speck of dust can be a disaster.



Photo by ARTHUR E. PRINCEHORN

Synchroma CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

imagery moves quickly. When the pitches are high, the colors become more intense.

Imagery may be projected on a screen, wall, ceiling or floor. For certain effects it may also be directed at people, paintings, fountains or smoke. An area the size of a postage stamp on a disc may be blown up to fill a space 20 by 30 feet.

A hand-operated switch regulates background tone behind the moving elements. The viewer has a choice of "gray sweep" or "color." Other controls allow the viewer to increase the instrument's sensitivity to pitch and its rate of horizontal movement.

The Synchroma attempts to integrate an art which exists in space (painting) with one which happens in time (music). Sound is visualized. Abstract imagery unfolds over a period of several minutes.

The images reproduced here thus do not reflect a total Synchroma experience any more than a single still photograph captures an entire ballet. These illustrations simply represent frozen moments in a dynamic art form.

Although Elliott has been working on the Synchroma for nearly a decade, only within the past couple of years has he discovered serious collaborative artists and a receptive public for his work.

To date Synchroma discs have been exhibited at the Allen Art Museum in Oberlin, Akron Institute of Art, Baltimore Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum and Howard Wise Gallery in New York.

In a gallery environment the Synchroma is presented as a self-contained artwork, a moving "picture" within a frame. Viewers walk into a darkened room, watch the imagery for as long as they find it interesting, then move on to the next object.

Artists Honore Guilbeau and Phyllis Seltzer are primarily concerned with creating discs for picture-frame projection. Mrs. Guilbeau, who this winter showed her discs in Mexico City, has experimented with new materials, decorative designs and sculptural forms. Mrs. Seltzer, who is also interested in unusual materials, has experimented with photographic images superimposed on abstract forms.

Daniel Hodermarsky, in addition to making discs for gallery showings, has explored the environmental aspects of the Synchroma. Last summer he incorporated Synchroma discs into "Fission," a multimedia piece created by Hodermarsky, choreographer Lawrence Berger and composer Donald Erb. And last March he introduced a few seconds of imagery at the conclusion of "Kinematica," another multi-media experiment by the same three artists.

At the Supplementary Education Center where he is coordinator of fine arts, Hodermarsky has a Synchroma unit and a large screen for showing discs made by children who come to the Center for a day of creativity.

Hodermarsky's theory is that anyone can learn Synchroma techniques just as anyone can learn to paint. The primary difference is that light rather than pigment serves as the color base.

The artist-educator freely admits that he does not comprehend all the complexities of the Synchroma. Nor does he believe this is necessary.

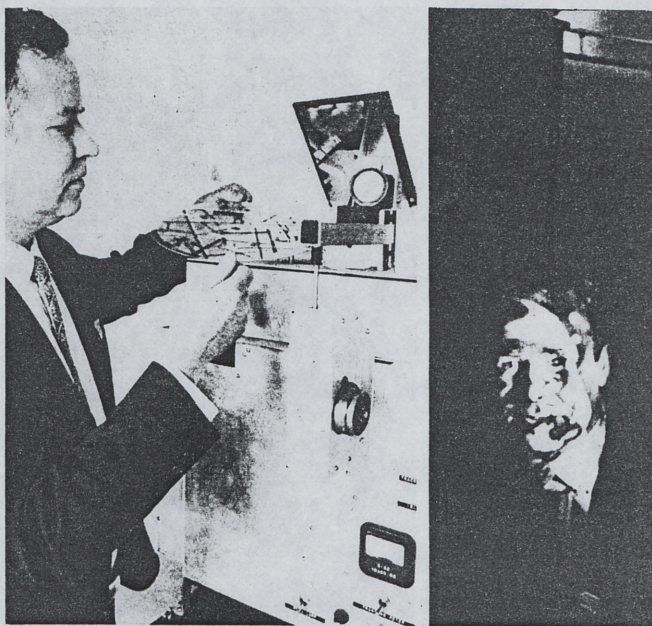
He knows the basic essentials required for making discs and turning on the machine. Beyond this, he is more interested in having fun with the Synchroma than in understanding how it works.

But what Hodermarsky really wants to do is "a wild rock piece—the farther out the better."

For Synchroma swingers who want their discs to "really grab an audience," Elliott has provided a "pop" unit which causes increased internal movement within the image.

When combined with contemporary rock, "pop" imagery, alive with sensuous gyrations and wild flashes, creates a fantastic Yellow Submarine world. And with pure electronic sounds, it at times opens up another dimension of consciousness almost too pleasurable to be legal.

For this unit Elliott has made psychedelic discs which react with brilliant colors and phenomenal optic effects. Several of these were used in a multi-media presentation, "Composition for Space and Sound," given at Cleveland College in February.



Stanley B. Elliott is the inventor of the Synchroma. At the right, he is transformed by his invention.

The impact was stunning. The dizzying discs, accompanied by Rudolph Bubalo's electronic music, were projected on the white ceiling of the Colman Building immediately following a smothering, noisy scene which was played in almost total darkness.

The Synchroma offered a soothing, calm contrast. Instantly it created another realm—at once impossible and real, liquid and brilliant, fascinating and repetitious.

Elliott, who is included in *American Men of Science* and is a member of Sigma Xi (honorary research society), does not claim to be an artist. He assembled these discs to demonstrate how certain stretched materials and crystalline inks would react to polarized light.

None of the Synchroma artists, however, chose to use these materials in quite the way Elliott intended. Thus the engineer suddenly found himself in the role of artist displaying his own discs in a multi-media production.

Elliott and his "Synchromists" have discovered that the relationship between engineer and artist sometimes causes thorny problems they had not encountered in the past.

Previously the engineer's task was functional rather than aesthetic. He perfected his technical knowledge and created his product to be sold and used. If something didn't work, he corrected it. His life was relatively sane and predictable.

Now in the age of multi-media and new combines, the engineer finds himself faced with a new breed. The artist, who is now his partner (or his customer), may choose not to use the latest technical innovation at all. He may want to use it in a completely unorthodox way, or he may ask the engineer to design something else entirely.

The artist, in the past, has not had to cope with these relationships either. He has been able to isolate himself in his proverbial garret, mixing his own pigment, realizing his own visions, creating his own techniques, doing what he wanted to do the way he wanted to do it without asking any scientist how.

Now the artist is no longer his own master. He is experimenting with new materials and processes at the expense of certain freedoms. He is plagued by plugs and circuits and switches and wires.

The artist who has worked with Synchroma most extensively and has had to face these problems most realistically is Forbes Whiteside, associate professor of art at Oberlin College.

Whiteside's imagery has been seen in New York, Baltimore, Cleveland, Akron, Oberlin and Peninsula. It has been projected

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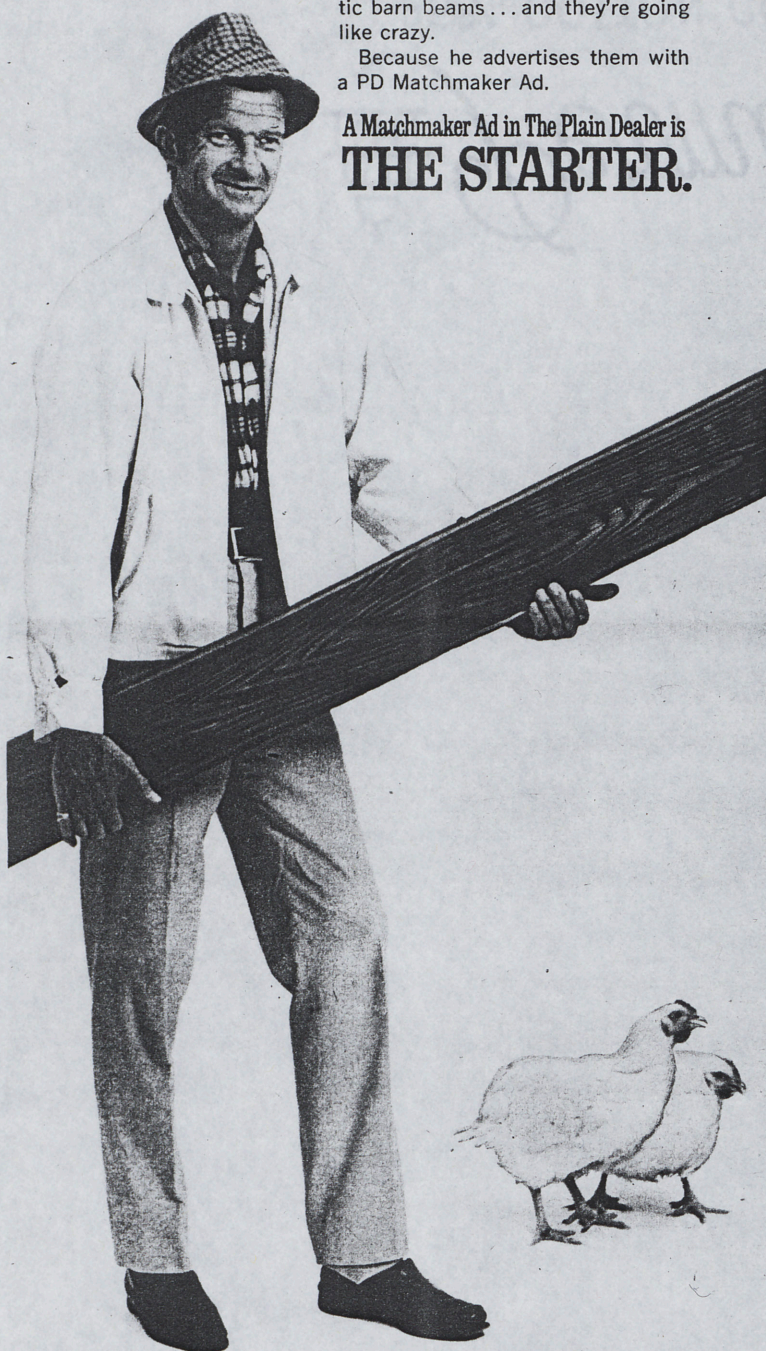
Grandpa's barn beams are big sellers.

His old barn stood up to everything but construction bulldozers.

Now his grandson is selling authentic barn beams...and they're going like crazy.

Because he advertises them with a PD Matchmaker Ad.

A Matchmaker Ad in The Plain Dealer is
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Synchroma CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

on both large and small screens to the accompaniment of live and electronic music.

This well-established artist whose paintings, prints, photography and drawings have been widely exhibited is continuously trying out new materials, new effects and new ways of projecting his discs.

Recently he opened up a fascinating optical arena by experimenting with moire patterns. He relates the movement of Synchroma imagery to a Calder mobile or the emotional quality of a fountain, and he has discovered that the superimposition of Synchroma on a hard-edge oil painting gives the static canvas a whole new life of its own.

A wellspring of creativity, he has original ideas about projecting Synchroma on water, combining it subliminally with film and integrating it into contemporary architecture.

Whiteside's imagery is subtle and sophisticated, his aesthetic concept of Elliott's instrument remote from the interpretation of psychedelic sock-it-to-me environmentalists.

He was, therefore, the logical Synchromist to create discs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which the Cleveland Civic Ballet performed with the Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra in Masonic Auditorium.

Marguerite Duncan, director of the Ballet, is not an avant-gardist. She did not want to offend her audience. Neither would she allow her dancers to disappear in a lot of background movement. She merely wanted some subdued color effects which would be projected on a scrim during the ballet's dream sequences.

After initial experiments, however, Miss Duncan decided to use the Synchroma only during the overture as a mood-setting device. So effective were the discs Whiteside created that the dancers had difficulty maintaining the beautiful, dream-like atmosphere he had established.

Besides the inevitable strain of working with other creative people, Whiteside, a meticulous craftsman, has encountered many technical frustrations.

Synchroma discs, he has learned, must be prepared under the kind of hygienic conditions which are more apt to be found in a scientific laboratory than in an artist's studio.

A single disc actually consists of two flat pieces of clear plastic about the size of a phonograph record. These enclose the bits of cellophane, plastic, glue, polymers and other double-refraction materials which respond to polarized light.

If a single speck of dust is left inside the sealed disc, it may look like a five-foot mistake when projected on a large screen.

Consequently, Whiteside wears a shower cap and a long nylon coat when he prepares his discs. An air filter protects his small working area, and a cover is placed over everything when he leaves his studio. However, he prefers to finish a disc at one sitting so that he can seal it immediately.

Fortunately for Whiteside, he has a small Synchroma unit (which he calls a composition box) in his studio. This allows him to try out his discs on the spot to see exactly what effect he is getting from a particular material.

The beauty of Synchroma and one of its success-assuring factors is its adaptability. Each artist who has worked with it has a valid approach. Each can preserve and develop his own personal style. Each adds a new dimension to the Synchroma as an art form.

In its relatively brief history, however, the Synchroma has also been subjected to much criticism.

Strong objections came from musicians who felt that the Synchroma, while dependent upon audio signals for its rate of movement and intensity of color, often relegated music to an incidental background function.

At times the music selected for Synchroma demonstrations had little relationship to the visual discs. Standard symphonic repertory fared the worst. Not only was it reduced to the insipidities of Muzak, but often the imagery accompanying it was in direct contradiction to the sacrosanct visions subconsciously stored away by viewers who knew the music intimately.

Electronic music fared better. Its wide frequency range stimulated the Synchronoma's most brilliant hues. Its sounds were new enough to be free of sentimental connotations, and most musicians agreed that, since watching a performance of electronic music by two or more immobile speakers was a pretty lifeless affair anyhow, visual imagery in this case added something to the musical experience.

The Synchronomists began poking around for recordings of electronic music. They tried compositions by Varese, Gaburo, Beaver, Ligeti and others. They experimented with avant-garde jazz and musique concrete. They were interested in the Moog synthesizer and Portfolio concerts at the Cleveland Institute of Music. They became conveyors of portable tape recorders and believers in instant homemade compositions.

Whiteside, Hodermarsky and Elliott were fortunate enough to work directly with Cleveland composers Leonard P. Smith, Donald Erb and Rudolph Bubalo who created electronic and live music specifically to complement visual discs.

Generally the results of these creative collaborations were more satisfying than the combinations of original discs with pre-composed music.

It was apparent, however, that the Synchronoma would not achieve a meaningful synthesis of sound and imagery until some composer came along with the vision to see the instrument's musical possibilities and the time and interest to develop them.

Enter Jose Serebrier.

Serebrier, Rockefeller Foundation composer-in-residence with the Cleveland Orchestra and conductor of the Cleveland Philharmonic, was planning a massive multi-media piece, "Vietnam Requiem," when he first saw the Synchronoma. Immediately he sensed that its brilliant visual imagery could be effectively synthesized with his music.

Serebrier describes his Requiem as a "total felt experience." The projected \$15,000-\$25,000 production requires a percussion orchestra, brass choir, male chorus, children's choir, actors, electronic equipment, film, slides, three Synchronoma units, lights, sculptural screens, audio engineers and technicians. The work is designed for Carnegie Hall, where it will be performed in July.

In creating so vast a composition, Serebrier is working closely with several other artists, including Whiteside, who is making the Synchronoma discs. These will be projected on walls, floor, ceiling and people as one important element in an artistic statement which will attempt a perfect synchronization of many visual and aural elements.

Serebrier and Whiteside also worked together on a smaller composition commissioned by the American Wind Symphony Orchestra of Pittsburgh for performance on the ensemble's famous "floating concert hall," a specially-constructed river barge named "Point Counterpoint."

This was to have been a short "fun piece" with Synchronoma as visual background to the music. Whiteside had hoped to project his discs on the water and on smoke. But because the orchestra decided to take the composition on its river tour, it became impractical to include the Synchronoma.

Elliott envisions the possibility of producing small home units which could be used with quality stereo equipment. He would like to see larger units permanently placed in art galleries, museums, theaters and schools, and he is convinced that Synchronoma installations could have therapeutic value in hospitals, clinics or doctors' waiting rooms.

But he is cautious.

He will not allow his quality product to be cheapened. He wants to avoid a "honky-tonk" image at all costs. He has a big chunk of his life tied up in the Synchronoma. He respects the offspring of his own genius, and he believes in its future.

He is not alone.

To artists and critics, to New York sophisticates and ordinary people in Walton Hills, to fervent disc-makers and impartial observers alike, there is no question about the significance of the Synchronoma. It ranks as Cleveland's foremost contribution to the new combine of Art and Technology.

Antique barn beams are big bargain finds.

They're perfect for decorating the new family room... absolutely authentic, full of character, and the price is right.

The family found them fast — and close to home — by looking first in PD Classified.

Where the usual things are sold and bought... and the unusual, too!

A Matchmaker Ad in The Plain Dealer is
THE STARTER.



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